October 2012

Applications to the Watershed Improvement Review Board
Guidance for Unsewered Communities (USC)

The Request For Applications (RFA) for the Watershed Improvement Fund is found on the following website: http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/IWIRB.asp .This document serves to provide guidance to an unsewered community applying for Watershed Improvement Funds administered by the Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB). This does not guarantee the project will be funded. One goal of the WIRB is to fund projects that will improve water quality in Iowa.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants for WIRB funds are specified in Iowa Code Chapter 466A.4. Eligible applicants include local watershed improvement committees, soil and water conservation districts, public water supply utilities, counties, county conservation boards, and cities.

Local Watershed Improvement Committees are defined in Iowa Code Chapter 466A.4.2. Two characteristics of a local watershed improvement committee are 1) it is organized as a nonprofit organization as recognized by the Iowa Secretary of State, and 2) a majority of the committee members represent a cause for the impairment in the watershed.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are units of government that provide local leadership in conserving soil, water, and related resources.

Public Water Supply Utilities are entities capable of providing to the public piped water for human consumption. The utility has at least fifteen service connections or regularly serves at least twenty-five individuals.

Counties are political subdivisions of the State of Iowa created to aid in the administration of state law for the purpose of local self-government. There are 99 counties within the State of Iowa.

County Conservation Boards are units of government that manage county areas for conservation and recreation purposes.

Cities are municipal corporations, but not including a county, township, school, or any special-purpose district or authority.

Unincorporated unsewered communities are ineligible applicants themselves. However, unincorporated unsewered communities could partner with an eligible applicant and submit a proposal. Alternately, an unincorporated unsewered community could organize as a local watershed improvement committee or become incorporated to become an eligible applicant.

The WIRB uses the following eight (8) assessment factors to evaluate and select proposed projects.

Assessment

A comprehensive watershed assessment must be completed. A comprehensive watershed assessment identifies the water quality problem(s), identifies where the problem is coming from, and identifies solution(s) to the problem. The assessment will inventory physical, social and financial resources of the watershed that impact or may be impacted by water quality.

The watershed assessment should identify all known potential sources of impairment in the watershed. However, the project does not need to address all potential sources of impairment. The proposal must demonstrate that the unsewered community is a source of the impairment or contributing factor to the degradation of water quality. Causes of impairment could include the presence of high levels of bacteria, high levels of ammonia, low concentrations of dissolved oxygen, or high levels of organic enrichment.

Overall, the application must illustrate how the unsewered community contributes to the watershed impairment. Please note – other obvious threats to health or the environment should also be included in the application.

Goals

Explain the goal of the watershed improvement project. For example, a goal for an unsewered community watershed project should include: bacteria levels will decrease in the watershed if a properly operating wastewater treatment system is installed. The proposal may also explain how other potential sources of impairment will be reduced or eliminated with a properly operating wastewater treatment system.

Results

Because other potential sources of impairment, i.e., a feedlot, may be present, the application must include measurables to demonstrate the proposed solutions will actually improve water quality. Please identify and explain specific measurables to be implemented in the application. Measurable results may include collecting and analyzing water samples to identify decreasing bacterial levels, modeling results, or book values of 'before' and 'after' treatment.

Collaboration and Local Leadership

Collaboration and local leadership is vital to making necessary decisions affecting the application, including evaluating the progress and success of the project. Also, partnering with other local interested parties is important to the success of the application. If other watershed projects are ongoing in the watershed, please identify the project and, if applicable, how the ongoing project relates to this project.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Division of Soil and Conservation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, local Resource Conservation and Development Organizations, and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts may be able to provide technical assistance.

Leveraging and Cost Effectiveness

Before applying for a Watershed Improvement Fund grant, applicants should attempt to acquire funding from alternative sources, including leveraging and in-kind contributions. Documentation illustrating other secured funding must be included in the application. Funding could be provided by, but not limited to, the Iowa Economic Development Authority, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Finance Authority, and United States Department of Agriculture. Note, a management entity (i.e. rural water-wastewater entity, city) can also leverage funds and provide in-kind contributions. Also, include potential sewer fees community residents will be required to pay to leverage funds. It is important to illustrate that while other alternative methods were considered, the proposed application is the most cost-effective method currently available.

Project Management and Accountability

Describe the entity responsible for managing the watershed improvement project, including how the project will be managed during all phases of the project, specifically, planning and design, construction, operation and maintenance protocol and fiscal ability and sustainability.

Public Outreach

Explain how the application includes public participation, awareness and education. For example, is the community aware of why the current situation adversely affects the local watershed? Is the community supportive of the watershed improvement project? Does the community understand and accept a potential water and/or wastewater (i.e., water-sewer) bill? Overall, please describe how the application incorporates community awareness and involvement in the watershed improvement project.

Innovation

Alternative technologies can reduce the overall cost of providing wastewater treatment in a community. Examples include clustered on-site systems, managed on-site systems, re-circulating sand filters and septic tank effluent pump (STEP) systems. In the application, explain any innovative and alternative technologies being utilized to improve water quality.